

USC School of Dramatic Arts

THTE 201La: Acting for Musical Theater

Units: 4.0

Section: 63302

Spring—T/TH—10:00-11:50am

Location: DAB 213

Instructor: Ashley Eskew

Office Hours: BY APPOINTMENT via zoom or in person

Contact Info: eskew@usc.edu

Course Description

Laying a foundation for the fundamentals of Music Theater, students will excavate the basics of scene work and being present in the room both through basic text and text accompanied by music. Students will focus on eliminating a performative approach to the work and exploring from the inside-out to cultivate honest and surprising moments for both actor and audience.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course students should be able to develop and seamlessly transition from their own physical body into that of the character. Be able to identify repertoire that is appropriate and/ or aspirational for themselves and their book and find corresponding cuts for auditions. Be able to take the energy of a space immediately upon entering the room for auditions and performance. Understand multiple Music Theater genres and how to approach them as an actor in performance.

Course Notes

This weekly course to meet in person in DAB 213 unless otherwise noted. Students will be responsible for finding all sheet music and physically printing it when requested or finding appropriate tracks to work with in class weekly. A bluetooth speaker will be provided weekly by professor for student use.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Finding weekly tracks via outlet of your choice.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Howard Guskin - *How the Stop Acting*

Twyla Tharpe- *The Creative Habit*

Andy Robinson- *Stepping into the Light*

Viola Spolin- *Improvisation for the Theater*

Various Clips of Live Performances

Supplementary Materials as Needed

** Please note that none of these materials need to be purchased (unless you would like). I will provide excerpts via Brightspace for student assignments and consumption.*

Description and Assessment of Assignments

There are three forms of Assignments in this course:

1) **PERFORMANCE**- Weekly performance expectations based on the pedagogical goal of the week. These include cuts of songs and repertoire and/ or scene work. All performances are to be prepared as follows: completely memorized and performance ready- able to engage in a state of play and work unhindered with word or note preoccupation.

2) **MUSICAL DELIVERABLES**- Each week a single actor will be assigned to bring an explanation of the musical they are working on. the political landscape of the time that could have contributed to its story or success as well as a list of recognizable songs from it/ list of recommendations for classmates to explore. As well as a second musical associated with one of the creative team or actors. The purpose of this is to expand the classes knowledge and curiosity of Musical Theater Repertoire.

3) **ACTOR'S JOURNALS**- A PHYSICAL JOURNAL, that will be checked sporadically and at random throughout the semester. 1 entry per a week that is either a personal reflection on your work or a response to the assigned reading.

Participation

Full credit for participation includes:

- Showing up on Time and Communicating AHEAD OF TIME (24 hours or more if at all possible) via email or Text if you will be absent. Communication should occur through the instructor and not your classmates.
- No Phones out during class time except on designated breaks.
 - Giving your full energy to your fellow actors remembering that the **Process is Our Product.**
- **3 unexcused Tardies will count as one Absence.**

Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
PARTICIPATION	15	15
PREPARATION	25	25
DELIVERABLES	20	20
JOURNAL	15	15
FINAL	25	25
TOTAL	100	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

All assignments to be submitted in class. All actors expected to be ready to perform on first day assignment is due whether or not you perform that day. All songs memorized and performance ready. Anything to be handed in (FINAL, JOURNAL or DELIVERABLE) will only be accepted late for 70% credit.

Grading Timeline

Immediate feedback in class. Instructor is always available for personal check-in.

Course Specific Policies

TARDIES

Daily Expectations- You will arrive on time. If you will be even one minute late you need to text me directly at 949-697-6556- NOT A CLASSMATE OR THE GROUP THREAD.

3 unexcused tardies will result in a lowering of your grade by 10%.

Come warm- physically and vocally and dressed in a way that will not inhibit your ability to do any exercise or movement that may be asked of you.

ABSENCES- must be cleared at least 24 hours in advance- again this needs to be through me directly, not the group. If you have any days you know you will be missing upfront please submit them in writing via email.

Emergencies will pop up and of course we can work together but this requires you all to COMMUNICATE UP FRONT.

PREP

The expectation is that you come to class memorized with music or scene prepared as discussed and ready to perform.

There will be NO RECORDING in class

The Space

We will create a list together of communal expectations but here are some non-negotiables that are necessary for this type of work.

1. We only speak for our own selves and our own boundaries. Practice using “ I “ statements - I GIVE, I FEEL, I NEED, etc.
2. LEAD WITH CURIOSITY INSTEAD of negativity. Choices coming from love and not fear.
3. Have the courage to follow as a leader and lead as a follower.
4. Be open to what feels new.
5. Allow yourself to explore multiple solutions before our work is set in stone. The process is our product.
6. We don't talk on anyone's work except our own outside of the room.

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Course Evaluations

Course evaluation occurs at the end of the semester university-wide. It is an important review of students' experience in the class. Please fill them out at the conclusion of our time together and submit per university policy.

SDA PRODUCTIONS, ISPS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SDA productions, ISPs and Extracurricular Activities* will not excuse you from any class work. There will be no exceptions made for absences in class, missed or delayed assignments, homework or lack of class participation resulting from your involvement in any of the above. Your grade will reflect your work in this class, independent from work in any other class or activity.

*Activities that have been officially sanctioned by the larger university (such as marching band, song girls, or varsity sports) are exempt. You must submit official documentation to your professor regarding your participation in an event prior to your absence.

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Preparation	Deliverables
Week 1 T- 1/14 TH- 1/16	Community Agreements/ What is Acting for MT?/ Taking up Space THE MOMENT BEFORE/ TIGER JUMPS	 IN CLASS: 16 Bar Cut of your Choosing HW: Read Excerpt from <i>The Creative Habit</i> (via Brightspace)	 Music for Cut Prepped (Accompaniment)
Week 2 T- 1/21 TH- 1/23	THE MOMENT BEFORE CONT'D THE MOMENT BEFORE CONT'D & THE CHARACTER TRIANGLE	16 Bar Cuts Cont'd 16 Bar Cuts Cont'd	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #1 DUE
Week 3 T- 2/4 TH- 2/6	 I WANT VS I NEED	I WANT SONGS I WANT SONGS CONT'D HW: Read Excerpt from Andy Robinson's <i>Stepping into the Light</i> on Brightspace	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #2 DUE
Week 4 T- 2/11 TH 2/13	I WANT VS I NEED (CONT'D) FREE SING- LOVE	I WANT SONGS Cont'd Love Songs/ Intro Rodin Project	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #3 DUE
Week 5 T-2/18 TH- 2/20	 FINDING THE PHYSICAL BODY	<i>RODIN PROJECT / 32 Bar Character Songs</i> <i>32 Bar Character Songs Cont'd</i> HW: Read Excerpt from <i>Zen Mind Beginner's Mind</i>	 RODIN PHOTOS IN CLASS MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #4 DUE
Week 6 T- 2/25 TH- 2/27	FINDING THE PHYSICAL BODY STANDARDS- Our Perfect Songs	32 Bar Character Songs Cont'd Standards- Full Song	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #5 DUE
Week 7 T-3/4 TH- 3/6	 STANDARDS	Standards Cont'd Standards Cont'd HW: Read Excerpt. From Howard Gusking <i>How to Stop Acting</i>	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #6 DUE
Week 8 T- 3/11 TH 3/13	STANDARDS/ DUETS	Finish Standards/ Choose Duet Partners CLASS TIME TO WORK ON DUETS	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #7 DUE JOURNAL SELF REFLECTION DUE
Week 9		SPRING RECESS	
Week 10 T-3/25 TH- 3/27	 DUETS/ LISTENING TO A SCENE PARTNER	DUETS Due- Full Songs DUETS Cont'd Hw: Read Excerpt from Michael Chekhov <i>To the Actor</i>	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #8 DUE MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #9 DUE
Week 11 T-4/1 TH-4/3	COMEDY	Comedy Songs Comedy Songs Cont'd	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #10 DUE
Week 12 T-4/8 TH-4/10	 COMEDY/ BALLADS	Comedy Songs Cont'd Ballads HW: Read Excerpt from Stephen Sondheim <i>Finishing the Hat</i>	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #11 DUE
Week 13 T- 4/15 TH-4/17	BALLADS	Ballads Cont'd Ballads Cont'd	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #12 DUE
Week 14 T-4/22 TH-4/24	STYLES	Genre Specific Song Genre Specific Song Cont'd	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #13 DUE MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #14 DUE
Week 15 T- 4/29 TH-5/1	STYLES/ CUTS INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS- REMOTE	Pop Rock	 MUSICAL DELIVERABLE #15 DUE

FINAL - REMOTE Due May 8 by 12pm to Ashley's Inbox- Anything received after will not be eligible to receive anything higher than a 70%.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion + Intimacy in Theatre Consent Culture Statement

Through our pluralistic approach of diverse pedagogies, methodologies, ideologies, and modalities of artistic expression, we invite(engage) and challenge students to expand their breadth and depth of knowledge, complexity, and range of the human experience. Even though we nurture, guide, and challenge our students to embrace the unknown or unfamiliar and step outside of their comfort zones through storytelling/art, we aim to practice effective strategies and offer tools to students mindful of their physical, psychological, social, and emotional wellbeing. In alignment with professional and industry standards, we will integrate core principles and techniques of Intimacy in Theater and Building Cultures of Affirmative Consent. This will provide agency, offer resources and support to the teachers, students, directors, and staff to establish healthy boundaries of consent when working on material that is physically, intimately, or emotionally charged content in both the classroom and production.

SDA Student Support & Reporting Form

To facilitate a supportive environment of accountability, SDA has created an internal system of reporting for students to address issues/concerns and to offer feedback or suggestions for improvement. This mechanism provides a pathway for reporting and offering feedback without fear of retaliation or judgment. Any submission filed through this form will be reviewed and processed accordingly through SDA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

To file a report, please visit: <https://bit.ly/SDAstudentreporting>

Statement on University Academic and Support Systems

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress:

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the Financial Aid Office webpage for undergraduate- and graduate-level SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-2500

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.